

'The Matter of Resistance'

A One-Day Conference at the University of Warwick
Friday, April 29th, 2016
Room 2.004, WBS



CRPLA

Warwick English
& Comparative
Literary Studies

Research Student
Skills Programme

Call for Papers

Deadline for Submissions:
February 20th, 2016

Confirmed Speakers:

Prof. Howard Caygill (Kingston)
Dr. Priyamvada Gopal (Cambridge)
Prof. Thomas Docherty (Warwick)

There is an escalating crisis in resistance studies. A decade ago, there was already such variation in conceptualizing resistance that 'little consensus on the definition of resistance' existed, as 'the term resistance remains loosely defined, allowing some scholars to see it almost everywhere and others almost nowhere.' It seems both conclusions ring true today, yet in recent years there appears to be an arising need to understand the term. Between the Arab Spring and what has fallen in its wake, such as ISIS, Occupy grew, along with Mexico's Disappeared, Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement, Greece's Anti-Austerity, USA's Black Lives Matter, Lebanon's #YouStink, and the UK's Free Education, to name a few. What has been called 'the age of uprising' and 'the age of resistance' has most recently been observed by social scientists, such as Costas Douzinas, as an age where philosophers and social theorists lack participation and understanding in 'resistance'.

2015 has already seen a rise in publications on 'resistance,' but this conference seeks to both further complicate and re-assemble resistance studies by bringing together various fields with a common and particular task. We ask, how does resistance appear materially, in order to ask how it can be recognized and defined? If demonstrable, is such an appearance *always* resistance? With a material focus, and hesitant resolve, we hope to encounter new practices, impasses and queries, and we do so as problems immediately surface when resistance is strictly perceived as a physical object of attention, and not also as an invisibility, a serialized process, an intent, erasure, or void. For example, celebratory riots of fandom in the U.S. have been distinguished by ESPN commentary by their "white" participants, in contrast to the "black" riots of Black Lives Matter: two patterns occurring within the same cities with similar behavior. Football matches, likewise, produce the violent zeal and outcry of protests, appearing to be resistant but are not so, thereby obfuscating the characteristics of material appearances of resistance. Does 'resistance,' then, remain merely an ideal concept, in thought only, disconnected from the 'aesthetics', 'determinism' or 'chaos' which governs it, or does resistance also necessitate acts of non-appearance, since active non-participation, in a Gandhian and Thoreauvian fashion, may be required for symbolic acts to then re-appear? Acts of non-participation and non-appearance, for instance, could be required against consumerism, surveillance, or individualism.

But how can the invisible be material, and produce resistance? James C. Scott has re-defined 'resistance' from the 'hidden transcripts' which secretly organize 'subaltern' movements, and

James Elkin relocates 'resistant art' as that which 'does not circulate on global markets.' Various philosophies rely on resistant non-appearance, as Jacques Rancière focuses upon the 'no-count' members of society, like the gypsies, who do not fully register in society yet form its boundaries. And the philosophy of science is advancing its methods of studying the appearances of non-appearance to engage with dark-matter, gravitational waves and neutrinos. Poetry, film, drama or dance has long privileged the space, pause or silence between other symbols of resistance. Under this light, even 'free speech acts' may appear only as a series of material consequences recognized in retrospect, thus a complex process of appearing and non-appearing instances (as the case of Charlie Hebdo may suggest).

This conference seeks to benefit from its unique, interdisciplinary collaboration, on one hand, and its particular focus upon the complex materiality of resistance, on the other. Potential questions raised by the conference include:

- How do resistant formations appear, or do so through non-appearance?
- Is there a single image or act of resistance, or is it a process requiring numerous acts?
- Can there be a theory of resistance that exists apart from its material practice?
- Can resistance be defined by how it appears?
- Can resistance be a prescribed practice of appearance or must it be spontaneous?
- Must there be a resistance that incorporates instances of non-appearance?

Papers are sought from such areas as cultural studies, literature, philosophy, poetry, film, philosophy of science, education, history, cultural geography, politics, sociology, and the arts. Examples of topics could include, but are certainly not limited to:

- mapping specific behavior, motions or patterns of a resistant movement
- tracing involvement with resistant performances or surface readings of poetry, film, drama, or fine arts
- engaging practical and ethical tensions of non-participation
- introducing schemas of non-appearance in philosophies of science
- outlining resistance in changes in gender, race, ecology
- following the conditions of resistant publication and circulation
- diagnosing the developing bodily symptoms of a resistant subject
- problematizing the resistant discourse of academics in academia
- tracking resistant rifts within critical university studies
- critiquing the historical debates involved in today's resistance studies

Please send abstracts of 250 words for a 20 minute paper, & a 100-word biography to: mattersofresistance@gmail.com

Deadline for Submissions: January 20th, 2016

Also send general inquiries to: mattersofresistance@gmail.com

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Confirmed Speaker Information:

Professor Howard Caygill is the Professor of Modern European Philosophy at Kingston University, London. His ranging work has focused on such figures as Kant, Kafka, Benjamin, and Levinas, and Prof Caygill's recent work, featured in his 2013 book, *On Resistance: A Philosophy of Defiance*, showcases a comprehensive study of both the politics and philosophy of resistance.

Dr. Priyamvada Gopal teaches in the Faculty of English at Cambridge University, where she primarily focuses on colonial and postcolonial literatures. Her subfields include British and American literature, translation, gender and feminism, Marx and critical theory, the politics of empire and globalization. Her historical and political work, from *Literary Radicalism in India* to *After Iraq: Reframing Postcolonial Studies*, precedes her current project entitled *Half the Story: Anti-Colonialism in the Making of Britain*.

Professor Thomas Docherty teaches in the English and Comparative Literary Studies Department at the University of Warwick, where his teaching ranges from the renaissance to the present, while specializing in the philosophy of literary criticism, critical theory, and cultural history in relation primarily to European philosophy and literature. With his most recent book, *Universities at War* (2014), Docherty continues to study with how resistance can and cannot occur within the power dynamics of the University.